



Good Governance in Policy Communication Governance for the Improvement of Digital Public Services

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ABSTRACT

The transformation of digital public services requires the government to not only build technological infrastructure, but also ensure that policies, procedures, service channels, and complaint mechanisms are communicated clearly, consistently, inclusively, and trustworthily. This article discusses the relationship between good governance and policy communication governance in supporting the improvement of digital public services, by combining a review of the literature on public administration, public sector communication, collaborative governance, whole-of-government, as well as the idea of a policy communication governance model developed in a dissertation proposal on the Government Communication Agency of the Republic of Indonesia. The method used is a descriptive qualitative approach based on literature study and conceptual analysis. The results of the study show that policy communication has a strategic position as an instrument of public governance because it functions to reduce policy ambiguity, harmonize cross-agency messages, strengthen public participation, and build public trust in digital services. In the context of digital public services, the principles of good governance are translated into six communication dimensions, namely information transparency, message accountability, public participation, digital channel responsiveness, cross-actor coordination, and access inclusivity. This article concludes that the improvement of digital public services is not sufficiently supported by service applications alone, but requires an integrated, adaptive, data-based, and public value-oriented policy communication governance model.

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has become an important agenda in public service reform in Indonesia. The government is increasingly encouraging service integration through the Electronic-Based Government System, Digital Public Service Malls, online complaint channels, and various cross-agency service platforms. However, the digitization of public services is not only related to the availability of applications, portals, or technological infrastructure. The success of digital public services is also determined by the government's ability to communicate policies clearly, consistently, and easily understood by the public as service users.

In practice, digital public services often face obstacles that are not only technical, but also communicative and governance. The public often experiences confusion about service procedures, administrative requirements, application status, data security, and complaint channels that must be used. At the same time, information from various ministries, institutions, and local governments can vary, even overlap. This condition shows that the quality of digital public services cannot be separated from the quality of policy communication governance.

Good governance is an important framework to understand these issues. The principles of transparency, accountability, participation, responsiveness, effectiveness, and inclusivity are the basis for the implementation of democratic and citizen-oriented public services. In the context of policy communication, these principles require governments to provide information that is open, verifiable, easily accessible, and able to accommodate public feedback. Thus, policy communication is not only an activity of disseminating information, but part of the governance mechanism that determines the quality of relations between the state and society.

Contemporary public administration studies also show a shift from the paradigm of hierarchical bureaucracy and New Public Management to New Public Governance. In this paradigm, the state is no longer understood as a single actor, but as an orchestrator of a policy network involving many actors, ranging from ministries/institutions, local governments, the media, civil society, the private sector, to citizens as service users. Therefore, policy communication in digital public services needs to be managed through a whole-of-government approach and collaborative governance so that government messages, channels, and actions are not fragmented.

This idea is relevant to the emergence of the Government Communication Agency of the Republic of Indonesia as an institution directed to coordinate the government's strategic policy communication. In Fahd Pahdepie's dissertation proposal, policy communication is positioned as a governance function that is tasked with orchestrating messages, actors, channels, and coordination mechanisms across ministries/institutions and regions. This perspective can be expanded into the theme of digital public services, because the digitization of services requires communication that is not only fast, but also harmonious, accountable, participatory, and oriented to public value.

Based on this background, this article aims to analyze how good governance can be the basis for policy communication governance to improve digital public services. This article also develops a conceptual model that explains the relationship between the principles of good governance, policy communication governance, service information quality, public participation, public trust, and improving the quality of digital public services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Good Governance in Public Administration

Good governance is a governance concept that emphasizes the importance of transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness, rule of law, responsiveness, and orientation to the public interest. In public administration, good governance is a criticism of government practices that are too closed, hierarchical, and less responsive to the needs of citizens. Good governance is not only measured by the ability to produce policies, but also by the way those policies are communicated, implemented, monitored, and accounted for to the public.

In the context of public services, good governance is directly related to the quality of services. Good service must provide procedural certainty, clarity of cost, certainty of time, fair access, and complaint mechanisms that can be used by the public. This principle is increasingly important in digital public services because the public does not always interact directly with officers, but through digital platforms. Therefore, information transparency and communication responsiveness are important factors in building trust in digital services.

Osborne (2010) explained that New Public Governance places public services in an interorganizational system involving many actors. In this perspective, public services are not only produced by the state, but also through complex networks of governance. The government is tasked with coordinating the actors, resources, and public values to be achieved. Thus, good governance in digital public services requires coordination of communication across actors so that service information is not fragmented, not contradictory, and does not confuse service users.

Governance of Policy Communication

Policy communication is the process of conveying, explaining, negotiating meaning, and forming public understanding of government policies. In the classic approach to policy implementation, communication is seen as one of the important factors that determine the success of policy implementation. Edwards III (1980) placed communication as the main variable of implementation, along with resources, executive disposition, and bureaucratic structure. If the policy message is unclear, inconsistent, or not conveyed to implementers and target groups, then implementation is at risk of failure.

Matland (1995) explained that policy implementation is influenced by the level of ambiguity and conflict. Policy communication plays a role in reducing ambiguity of objectives, clarifying instructions, and mediating conflicts between implementers. In digital public services, ambiguity can arise in the form of

unclear service procedures, differences in information between centers and regions, or inconsistencies between policy narratives and user experience. Therefore, policy communication must be managed as a governance system, not just a publication activity.

Canel and Luoma-aho (2019) stated that public sector communication has a strategic role in building intangible assets, such as trust, legitimacy, reputation, and the relationship between the government and citizens. A government that is able to communicate openly, consistently, and responsively will find it easier to build policy legitimacy. Conversely, fragmentary and reactive communication can weaken public trust, especially in a digital ecosystem that is very fast-paced, open, and prone to misinformation.

Digital Public Services

Digital public services refer to the provision of government services through information and communication technology to improve the convenience, speed, efficiency, accessibility, and quality of user experience. This transformation includes the use of service portals, mobile applications, digital identities, online complaint systems, data integration, and interoperability between agencies. In the Indonesian context, the transformation of digital public services is related to the SPBE agenda and the development of integrated services such as MPP Digital.

However, the e-government literature shows that the success of digital public services is not only determined by technological infrastructure. Trust, ease of use, information quality, data security, and government responsiveness are important determinants in the adoption of digital services by the public (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Carter & Bélanger, 2005). Thus, policy communication has a central role in explaining the benefits of digital services, procedures for use, data protection, and assistance channels when people experience difficulties.

The United Nations (2024) emphasizes the importance of inclusive, accountable, and sustainable development-oriented digital governance. This perspective shows that the digitalization of public services should not only pursue administrative efficiency, but should also ensure equitable access and citizen engagement. In this context, policy communication governance serves to ensure that people are not left behind due to digital literacy limitations, language barriers, internet access, or differences in socio-economic capacity.

Collaborative Governance dan Whole-of-Government

Collaborative governance is a framework that explains how public and non-public actors work together in the decision-making process and policy implementation. Ansell and Gash (2008) define collaborative governance as a governance arrangement that involves one or more public bodies directly with non-state actors in the collective decision-making process. Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2012) expanded this framework through the concept of collaborative governance regime which includes principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action.

In digital public services, collaborative governance is needed because digital services generally involve many actors, ranging from

ministries/institutions, local governments, technology providers, data operators, service officers, media, and the user community. Without collaborative governance, digital services can be trapped in system fragmentation, sectoral egos, duplication of applications, and differences in communication standards. Therefore, policy communication must be able to be an inter-actor orchestration mechanism.

Whole-of-government is also relevant in this context. Christensen and Lægreid (2007) describe whole-of-government as an approach to overcome public sector fragmentation through horizontal and vertical coordination. In digital public services, this approach is important because the public does not see services based on the administrative boundaries of the agency, but based on the needs of services that must be completed. Therefore, policy communication must be prepared across agencies so that the digital public service experience becomes more integrated.

Public Value and Public Trust

Public value is the value generated by the government through policies and services that benefit the community. Moore (1995) emphasizes that public organizations must be able to create values that are recognized by citizens, have legitimacy, and are supported by operational capacity. In digital public services, public value can emerge in the form of ease of access, time savings, service fairness, procedural transparency, and increased trust in the government.

Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg (2014) developed the concept of public value governance by emphasizing the importance of democracy, collaboration, and shared value creation. Quality digital public services are judged not only by how fast the system works, but also by whether the service really answers the needs of citizens. Policy communication is a bridge between service design and citizen experience because through public communication the government can explain, listen, respond, and improve services.

Public trust is an important output of policy communication. When people understand service procedures, obtain consistent information, and feel the government's response to their complaints, trust in digital public services can increase. Conversely, if policy communication is unclear, unresponsive, or inconsistent between agencies, then digital services can be perceived as complicated, insecure, and not in favor of the community.

METHODOLOGY

This article uses a descriptive qualitative approach with literature study and conceptual analysis methods. This approach was chosen because the purpose of the article is not to test the statistical relationship between variables, but to build a theoretical argument about the relationship between good governance, governance of policy communication, and improvement of digital public services.

The data sources used consist of academic literature, regulatory documents, institutional reports, and conceptual materials from dissertation proposals on policy communication governance models in the implementation

of the President's priority programs at the Government Communication Agency of the Republic of Indonesia. The academic literature includes the theory of good governance, New Public Governance, collaborative governance, whole-of-government, public sector communication, policy implementation, e-government, and public value.

The analysis technique is carried out through several stages. First, identify the main relevant concepts, namely good governance, policy communication, digital public services, collaborative governance, and public value. Second, the categorization of literature based on its theoretical functions, namely foundational theory, mechanism theory, and applicative theory. Third, conceptual synthesis to find relationships between conceptual variables. Fourth, the development of an argumentative model regarding good governance-based policy communication governance to improve digital public services.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Policy Communication as an Instrument of Good Governance

The results of the study show that policy communication is an important instrument in the implementation of good governance in digital public services. The principle of transparency is realized through the provision of clear, open, and easily accessible service information. The principle of accountability is realized through the consistency of government messages, clarity of the person in charge of services, and the availability of clarification and complaint mechanisms. The principle of participation is realized through digital feedback channels that allow the public to submit complaints, criticisms, and inputs.

In this framework, policy communication can no longer be understood as a complementary activity once a policy has been established. Communication must be present from the process of formulation, implementation, monitoring, to policy evaluation. Digital public services require cyclical communication, namely conveying information, receiving feedback, improving services, and re-communicating changes made by the government.

Communication Fragmentation as an Obstacle to Digital Public Services

This study found that one of the main obstacles to digital public services is the fragmentation of inter-institutional communication. Fragmentation arises when each agency has different messages, channels, terms, and communication procedures. This condition can cause people to receive non-uniform information about digital services. In the long run, communication fragmentation can lower public trust because people see the government as an uncoordinated entity. Fragmentation can also occur between central and local governments. Digital public services are often designed nationally, but are used by people in regions with different digital capacities, infrastructure, and literacy. If policy communication is not tailored to the local context, people may have difficulty understanding the benefits and how services are used. Therefore, communication governance must pay attention to vertical coordination between the central and regional governments.

Policy Communication Orchestration Needs

The results of the analysis show that digital public services require policy communication orchestration. Orchestration means the process of coordinating actors, messages, channels, communication times, and response mechanisms so that policies are delivered consistently and in harmony. In this context, institutions such as Bakom RI can be understood as a strategic node that functions to unite policy narratives across ministries/institutions.

Communication orchestration is necessary because digital public services are usually cross-sectoral. One digital service can involve population data, licensing, payments, complaints, identity authentication, and inter-agency system integration. If communication about these services is not orchestrated, the public will face fragmented information. Therefore, communication governance must have an authority structure, coordination mechanism, message standards, and evaluation system.

Conceptual Model of Policy Communication Governance

Based on the synthesis of the literature, this article formulates a conceptual model of good governance-based policy communication governance for digital public services. The model consists of five main components. First, the context of the system, namely regulations, institutional structures, digital capacity, community characteristics, and the digital media landscape. Second, governance inputs, namely leadership, institutional mandates, communication resources, public data, and community service needs. Third, the orchestration process, namely cross-agency coordination, message alignment, issue management, use of digital channels, and public involvement. Fourth, communication output, namely clear service information, consistent policy narrative, complaint response, educational content, and clarification of issues. Fifth, service outcomes, namely increased service accessibility, user satisfaction, public trust, policy legitimacy, and public value.

This model works iteratively. This means that the outcomes of digital public services must be feedback for the improvement of the next policy communication. If people have difficulty using services, then the government must improve not only its technological systems, but also messages, help channels, service guidelines, and response mechanisms.

Operational Dimensions of Good Governance in Digital Public Service Communication

This article finds six operational dimensions that can be used to implement good governance in digital public service communication governance. First, information transparency, namely openness regarding procedures, requirements, service time, costs, data security, and user rights. Second, communication accountability, which is clarity on who is responsible for information, channels, and service responses. Third, public participation, namely the availability of digital spaces for complaints, consultations, user experience surveys, and community involvement. Fourth, responsiveness, which is the government's ability to respond to public questions, complaints, and issues quickly and accurately. Fifth, cross-actor coordination, namely the alignment of

messages between ministries/institutions, local governments, and service units. Sixth, digital inclusivity, namely the government's communication ability to reach groups with limited literacy, internet access, language, age, or disability.

The finding that policy communication is an instrument of good governance is in line with Osborne's (2010) thinking about the New Public Governance. In the NPG paradigm, the government cannot work as a single actor who only issues instructions in a hierarchical manner. Digital public services involve many actors and systems, so policy communication must be managed as an interorganizational process. Thus, communication governance is part of the state's capacity to coordinate digital public service networks.

The results of the study on communication fragmentation are also related to the whole-of-government theory. Christensen and Lægreid (2007) explain that fragmentation is one of the main problems in public sector reform. When agencies work with sectoral logic, the community can experience services that are not integrated. In digital public services, fragmentation is not only seen in different application systems, but also in information that is not uniform. Therefore, policy communication must be an instrument of horizontal integration between ministries/institutions and vertical integration between the central and regional governments.

The need for policy communication orchestration is in line with the collaborative governance frameworks of Ansell and Gash (2008) and Emerson et al. (2012). Collaborative governance emphasizes the importance of principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action. In the context of digital public services, principled engagement is seen in the process of equalizing the definition of service problems, shared motivation is seen in trust between institutions to share data and messages, while capacity for joint action is seen in the ability to build common communication channels, message guidelines, and integrated responses to public complaints.

The conceptual model developed in this article also strengthens the theory of policy implementation. Matland (1995) emphasizes that ambiguity and conflict affect the success of implementation. Digital public services that are not clearly communicated can increase ambiguity at the user and implementation levels. For example, the public does not understand service procedures, local officers interpret policies differently, or complaint channels do not have a standard of response. In such situations, policy communication serves as a mechanism to reduce ambiguity, align perceptions, and lower potential implementation conflicts.

This discussion is also related to the concept of public sector communication from Canel and Luoma-aho (2019). Effective government communication can build trust, legitimacy, and institutional reputation. In digital public services, trust is a very important factor because people hand over personal data, follow online procedures, and rely on systems that are not always physically visible. If communication regarding data security, service procedures, and complaint mechanisms is not clear, then public trust in digital services can be weakened.

In addition, this model supports the concept of public value from Moore (1995) and Bryson et al. (2014). Good digital public services are not only fast

services, but services that create value for society. These values include convenience, fairness of access, certainty, time efficiency, and trust. Policy communication plays a role in ensuring that these values are understood, felt, and evaluated by the community. Therefore, communication should not stop at the publication of government achievements, but should be directed at the creation of a better service experience.

In the context of Bakom RI, the idea of orchestrating policy communication can make an important contribution to improving digital public services. As an institution that has the function of coordinating strategic communication with the government, Bakom RI can act as a node for aligning narratives, managing issues, strengthening communication capacity across ministries/institutions, and developing digital policy communication standards. However, the effectiveness of the role depends on the clarity of the mandate, coordination mechanisms, data support, human resource capacity, and the ability to build trust across agencies.

Thus, the relationship between literature review and the results of the study shows that good governance, collaborative governance, whole-of-government, public sector communication, policy implementation, and public value reinforce each other in explaining the importance of policy communication governance. Digital public services cannot be improved just by multiplying applications. The government must ensure that the digitization of services is accompanied by transparent, accountable, participatory, responsive, coordinated, and inclusive communication.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Good governance is a crucial foundation for strengthening policy communication governance in the improvement of digital public services. Digital public services cannot rely only on applications, platforms, or technological infrastructure, but must also be supported by transparent, accountable, participatory, responsive, coordinated, and inclusive communication. In this context, policy communication should be understood as a governance function that reduces policy ambiguity, aligns messages across institutions, increases public understanding, and strengthens public trust. Therefore, communication governance is essential to ensure that citizens can clearly understand service procedures, requirements, benefits, complaint mechanisms, and their rights as users of digital public services.

Based on this analysis, the government needs to integrate policy communication into every stage of digital public service development, from policy formulation and service design to implementation and evaluation. Inter-agency coordination must be strengthened to avoid fragmented and inconsistent information, while institutions such as Bakom RI can play a strategic role as an orchestrator of government communication. Digital public service communication should also be citizen-centered, data-driven, and supported by effective feedback mechanisms so that public responses can be used to improve service quality. Future research is recommended to empirically examine how

policy communication governance is implemented in specific digital public service programs.

FURTHER STUDY

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, this research is limited to a conceptual and descriptive analysis of good governance in policy communication governance for improving digital public services, so it has not yet empirically measured the direct effectiveness of communication governance practices in actual government institutions, digital service platforms, or citizen experiences. Second, the study focuses on policy communication governance, good governance principles, inter-agency coordination, collaborative governance, public trust, digital responsiveness, and public value, but it has not deeply examined technical and sectoral aspects such as digital infrastructure performance, system interoperability, data protection mechanisms, platform usability, digital literacy gaps, cybersecurity risks, and the financial sustainability of digital public service programs. Therefore, further research is recommended to use an empirical approach through interviews, surveys, field observations, user experience analysis, and policy document analysis involving government communication institutions, ministries/agencies, local governments, digital service providers, public service users, civil society organizations, academics, and media actors. Future studies may also develop and test an integrated good governance-based policy communication model to evaluate its effectiveness in improving information transparency, communication accountability, citizen participation, inter-agency coordination, digital service accessibility, public trust, responsiveness, and the overall quality of digital public services.

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